

The Christmas my dad shipped out

Lance Goodman is a sophomore at West Lauderdale High School. He lives in Collinsville with his parents, Murphy and Beth, and two siblings, Lauren and Luke. The family attends First Baptist Church of Collinsville. Lt. Col. Murphy Goodman flies KC-135's for the 186th Air Refueling Wing, homebased at Key Field in Meridian. His son says, "I think some day I'll be in the National Guard fighting for everyone here at home."

What happens in Lance's story is not uncommon in military families. Sometimes, you just have to ignore the calendar, and celebrate holidays when everyone can be together.

By Lance Goodman
special to The Star

Look around you, there are yellow ribbons everywhere. When I ask someone what the yellow ribbons mean to them, they all say it means that they're thinking about the soldiers overseas fighting for their rights and freedoms.

That made me think about what the yellow ribbons mean to me. To me, it reminds me of the Christmas my dad went overseas with the Mississippi Air National Guard.

It was Dec. 10, 2002. My family and I were eating lunch together. My dad got this very important call — it was the National Guard. They told him that he was going to be deployed to Turkey and he was going to leave on Dec. 20.

We were all disappointed that he was going to be gone for Christmas, and we knew it wouldn't be the same without him. We were also very sad that he was going to be gone



SUBMITTED PHOTO

186TH AIR REFUELING WING

Lance Goodman, a sophomore at West Lauderdale High School, is shown at Key Field in Meridian with his father, Lt. Col. Murphy Goodman of the Mississippi Air National Guard's 186th Air Refueling Wing.

for awhile.

My parents told my brother, sister and me that we were going to have Christmas early. It sounded great at the time ... but then I thought about it and remembered that my dad wasn't going to be here for the real Christmas. It made me sad.

My parents stayed home to put out all of our Christmas presents. They placed them under the tree while we went to my granny's house.

While we were at my granny's house, we were all

excited to get back home to see what we got for Christmas. The only thing we could do while we were there was watch TV. We were all sitting on the couch watching the news because it was 10 o'clock.

My mom called us and told us that they were ready for us to come back home. We were so excited, and my sister drove us home. When we got there, my parents had all of our presents laid out everywhere in the living room. It was a fun night, and we had a good early Christmas.

Well, my dad did have to deploy on Dec. 20. We were sad and he was too, but he called us every chance he had. We made it OK with him gone, but it was very different. He stayed safe the whole time he was there, and only had to stay for two months.

Now when I see yellow ribbons everywhere, especially at Christmas, I think about my dad being gone and all the families that have loved ones gone.

I hope they had a good Christmas, and I hope next Christmas will be happier.

I Miss

Matthew Deweese is a senior at Meridian High School. He enjoys sports, music and cooking and wants to be a physical therapist. In this short-but-sweet poem, Matthew gets right down to cases.

I miss your ice cream.
I miss your homemade cobbler.
But mostly, I miss you.

— Matthew Deweese

SPEAK UP

Shamir Gordon, a sophomore at Southeast Lauderdale High School, thought Guardsmen, Reservists and active-duty military personnel might take some comfort out of Lauderdale County residents' responses to the question, "What is your favorite Bible scripture and what did you learn from it?"

"My favorite Bible verse is Psalm 37:4: 'Delight thyself in the ways of the Lord, and he will grant the desires of thine heart.' I learned that if I follow the Lord, he will grant my desires."

Brittany Lewis, sophomore

"My favorite scripture is Romans 3:23: 'For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.' This verse taught me that I am not the only sinner in the world, and that everyone has sinned. There was only one perfect person and that was Jesus."

Callie Nelson, 15

"My favorite verse in the Bible is John 15:13: 'There is no greater love than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends.' It has strong meaning."

Katelyn Gibson, sophomore

"My favorite verse is Philippians 4:13: 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' By reading this verse, I always know that I can do anything with God by my side."

Erin Johnson, 16

"My favorite verse is Proverbs 3:5-6: 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not upon your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct they paths.' These verses have taught me to have to trust in God in all I do, and look to him in all I do so he can keep my paths right."

Brittany Butler, 15

"My favorite verse in the Bible would have to be Galations 6:9, (which tells us) let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after awhile we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't get discouraged and give up."

Virginia Etheridge, teacher

"My favorite Bible verse would have to be John 3:17: 'For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.' I learned that we all get an equal chance to be saved."

Rickita Alford, 22

"My favorite verse from the Bible is from the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:3: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' This verse has taught me to put God first in my life — because God gave his life for us so that we can have eternal life."

Susie Hall, 76

Shamir Gordon compiled this Speak Up question. She is a member of Good Hope CME Church in the Russell community. She enjoys talking on the phone, shopping and spending time with her family. Shamir wants to become a pediatric nurse.

Here is how she answered her own question: "My favorite verse from the Bible is from the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:12: 'And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.' This verse has taught me that I should confess all of my sins, and that the Lord will forgive me, but I must also forgive the people who sin against me."

Lifting up Jesus in a strange land

Deborah Johnson's "Bragging Rights" submission is about her son, Specialist Darius Ewing of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 150th Combat Engineer Battalion, headquartered in Meridian — the "Dixieappers."

"Our school, Poplar Springs Elementary, has adopted the 150th and made Veterans Day cards," she said. "Darius visited the school on one of his trips home to thank the students."

Deborah wrote this story in January, as Darius was at Camp Shelby awaiting deployment to Iraq.

By Deborah Johnson
special to The Star

I want to brag on Darius because he is a young man who truly loves the Lord and is a willing servant.

Darius was activated for Iraq as he prepared to finish his senior year of college at Jackson State University.

He is a mighty young man of God who believes God has it all in control. He is a young man of strong Christian faith.

"It's going to be all right, for the same God here is in Kuwait and Iraq," he said. "I've got my hand in the winding chain, I've got my hand in God's hand, and it's going to be all right."

Darius is a member of Mount Olive Baptist Church and he never misses an opportunity to share that faith. Each time he returns home, he makes sure it's on Sunday so he can worship the Lord and share his musical gifts.

We love you, Darius! I am sure he will be singing "Zion Song" and lifting up Jesus in a strange land.



Ewing

